



FEMA

Moving Highway Shop Improves Disaster Response

Crawford County, WI – Before, during, and after flooding, employees of the Crawford County Highway Shop in Gays Mills, Wisconsin, spent hours and days moving vehicles, heavy equipment, and computers, and sandbagging and raising things off the ground, all in an effort to protect their facility from rising waters.

During past floods, the old concrete block building was inaccessible for as long as a week. Phone calls from residents went unanswered and staff was often on the wrong side of the flooding Kickapoo River from the equipment they needed. Then everything had to be dried out, cleaned up, and put back. They always lost vehicle parts.

Some of the duties Crawford County Highway Shop performs during major storms include closing roads, floodwater rescues, erecting safety devices, providing a physical presence, and building temporary dikes. Time spent protecting their equipment and shop took them away from providing these services to residents of the county.

Following two flood events in 2000 when the Kickapoo River overflowed and in 2001 when the Mississippi River flooded the area, Crawford County applied for and secured funds from Wisconsin Emergency Management through Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Relocating the facility was underway.

Crawford County spent an estimated \$2.7 million from various grants to fund the relocation project, which involved acquisition of the original property, demolishing and clearing the property, and rebuilding out of the floodplain.

With fuel contaminants and chlorinated solvents in the soil underneath the original building, county officials conducted an extensive cleanup project to reduce risk of flood waters transporting contaminants to area water ways.

The county was also required to do a “Farmland Impact Study” for the new property. Because the 42-acre site had been previously subdivided, zoned, and platted for development, no farmland was lost in the move.

By 2003 the county had a newly constructed Crawford County Highway Shop, centrally located near Seneca and at one of the highest points in the county.

“The central location has made it a lot easier to send equipment out to necessary areas and it doesn’t take as long to reach different parts of the county,” added Pelock. “The new facility is larger with bigger sign and mechanic shops and vehicle storage. We have more offices and now a large conference room which is accessible for public meetings. It gets used almost every night.”

In August 2007 Gays Mills received more than 12 inches of rain, and the highest flood waters in the valley’s history did not recede for two weeks. The new shop remained high and dry while Gays Mills was inundated.



Crawford County,
Wisconsin



Quick Facts

Year:

2000

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$2,700,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Flood-proofing

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)